



[Albert Luthuli, 1898 - 1967](#)

## Albert Luthuli

[Chief Albert Luthuli](#) was President-General of the African National Congress from 1952 until his death in 1967. In 1960, the year of the Sharpeville massacre, Luthuli was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Our sample of his work is his Peace Prize lecture, delivered in Stockholm, Sweden (**attached**).

This speech fits in well with our course. It followed the first batch of African independence-struggle victories after the World War of 1939-45. In the same year of 1960, 16 African countries achieved independence.

We have already seen material from Paul Robeson and W E B Du Bois, helping us to recall the worldwide uprising of internationalist political will for the end of direct colonialism,

which was to a large extent a consequence of the victorious Anti-Fascist World War. Luthuli's speech shows his consciousness of this internationalism, of which the awarding of his Peace Prize was one expression.

Note that Luthuli's speech accepting the Peace Prize is not a pacifist speech. It does not condemn armed struggle, but on the contrary, justifies it. Here are some relevant paragraphs from the speech:

*"This award could not be for me alone, nor for just South Africa, but for Africa as a whole. Africa presently is most deeply torn with strife and most bitterly stricken with racial conflict. How strange then it is that a man of Africa should be here to receive an award given for service to the cause of peace and brotherhood between men. There has been little peace in Africa in our time. From the northernmost end of our continent, where war has raged for seven years, to the centre and to the south there are battles being fought out, some with arms, some without. In my own country, in the year 1960, for which this award is given, there was a state of emergency for many months. **At Sharpeville, a small village, in a single afternoon sixty-nine people were shot dead and 180 wounded by small arms fire; and in parts like the Transkei, a state of emergency is still continuing. Ours is a continent in revolution against oppression. And peace and revolution make uneasy bedfellows. There can be no peace until the forces of oppression are overthrown.***

*"Our continent has been carved up by the great powers; **alien governments have been forced upon the African people by military conquest and by economic domination; strivings for***

*nationhood and national dignity have been beaten down by force; traditional economics and ancient customs have been disrupted, and human skills and energy have been harnessed for the advantage of our conquerors. In these times there has been no peace; there could be no brotherhood between men.*

*“But now, the revolutionary stirrings of our continent are setting the past aside. Our people everywhere from north to south of the continent are reclaiming their land, their right to participate in government, their dignity as men, their nationhood. Thus, **in the turmoil of revolution, the basis for peace and brotherhood in Africa is being restored by the resurrection of national sovereignty and independence, of equality and the dignity of man.***

*“It should not be difficult for you here in Europe to appreciate this. Your continent passed through a longer series of **revolutionary upheavals**, in which your age of feudal backwardness gave way to the new age of industrialization, true nationhood, democracy, and rising living standards - the golden age for which men have striven for generations. Your age of revolution, stretching across all the years from the eighteenth century to our own, encompassed some of the bloodiest civil wars in all history. By comparison, the African revolution has swept across three quarters of the continent in less than a decade; its final completion is within sight of our own generation...*

*“Perhaps, by your standards, our surge to revolutionary reforms is late. If it is so - if we are late in joining the modern age of social enlightenment, late in gaining self-rule,*

*independence, and democracy, it is because in the past the pace has not been set by us. Europe set the pattern for the nineteenth and twentieth-century development of Africa. Only now is our continent coming into its own and **recapturing its own fate from foreign rule.***

*“Though I speak of Africa as a single entity, it is divided in many ways by race, language, history, and custom; by political, economic, and ethnic frontiers. But in truth, despite these multiple divisions, Africa has a single common purpose and a single goal - the achievement of its own independence. All Africa, both lands which have won their political victories but have still to overcome the legacy of economic backwardness, and lands like my own whose political battles have still to be waged to their conclusion - all Africa has this single aim: **our goal is a united Africa** in which the standards of life and liberty are constantly expanding; in which the ancient legacy of illiteracy and disease is swept aside; in which the dignity of man is rescued from beneath the heels of colonialism which have trampled it. This goal, pursued by millions of our people with revolutionary zeal, by means of books, representations, demonstrations, and **in some places armed force** provoked by the adamancy of white rule, **carries the only real promise of peace** in Africa. Whatever means have been used, the efforts have gone to end alien rule and race oppression.”*

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Africa and Freedom, Albert Luthuli, Nobel Peace Prize Lecture, 1960.](#)
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